



Politics, health, and mesothelioma: when it comes to cancer, none is one too many

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BACKGROUND

All public strategies and policies are ultimately public health policies and strategies. Laws are introduced on principles, and principles dictate policies. For example: Any political decision that increases taxes directly affects amounts of disposable income, which immediately influences decisions on spending priorities. Those choices contribute to personal stress and induce anxieties, which in turn have a direct influence on health. Distress over food purchases, heating requirements, necessary medications, clothing, housing, or education all tend to disrupt personal economic equilibrium. Civil engineers and architects designing waterworks, drains, pavements, walkways, hospitals, schools, commercial buildings, homes, skyscrapers, air-conditioning, or bridges essentially use health principles to dictate public plans, policies, and living spaces.

The medical profession has the freedom to decide on health care principles, strategies, and therapies, but it also shoulders responsibilities for influencing, advocating, and advising on promulgating, propagating, and implementing sound industrial and monetary policies.

PROBLEMS ARISING AND THE CHALLENGE

When scientific medical knowledge clashes with ambitious political monetary interests, civil strife and irrational application of established principles leads to strange strategies of stupidity. Asbestos was once mined and universally used and promoted in industry as a heat insulator in electrical goods, outdoor furniture, and water-carrying pipes, and as a binder in concrete and other building materials. Claims have been made about the safety of asbestos, especially if procured under controlled conditions

and if used judiciously in manufactured products. Chrysotile is argued to be less harmful than other forms of asbestos. Russia and Kazakhstan are currently major producers of chrysotile.

After exposure to and inhalation of dust derived from fraying old asbestos-laden artifacts, asbestos crystals have reliably been implicated as a cause of lung diseases. Asbestos dust always contains silicate crystals (called ferruginous bodies) that, when inhaled, are consistently found embedded within resultant pathologic tissues. As of 2011 in Canada, the town of Asbestos is seeking government support through political financial funding to reinvigorate old asbestos mining operations. Unfortunately, when asbestos fibres (calcium and magnesium silicates) are inhaled, they will induce pathologic changes leading to mesothelioma or bronchial carcinoma, or both. A lesion biopsy with the presence of asbestos bodies in association with pulmonary fibrosis establishes the diagnosis.

DISCUSSION

Just as the medical profession is responsible for public health, so too are financiers and politicians responsible and accountable for the results of their actions on the public. The causal relationship between exposure to asbestos and lung disease, specifically mesothelioma and interstitial fibrosis, was established more than 75 years ago.

Lawsuits against asbestos mining interests, manufacturers, and employers have proliferated ever since. Liability resulting from the sheer number of lawsuits and people affected has reached billions of dollars from a high proportion of those cases.

THE TRUTH

Asbestosis has been clearly established as a carcinogen, its presence being recognized as dangerously hazardous to health; and asbestosis is irrefutably linked to prolonged inhalation of asbestos dust¹⁻³.

Political and financial interests ignoring medical facts of principle can lead only to spurious health policies fraught with danger.

Monetary and political interests should not dictate against known health policies. The medical profession ends up trying to provide salutary, sane solutions to problems deriving from specious, insane thinking. Should asbestos mining and usage be re-introduced, not only will medical resources and services be strained, drained, and wasted, but the legal profession will also drag the asbestos promoter, employer, and government through the courts for individual legal adjudication, claims, and compensation. Most informed opinion views asbestos use as indefensible⁴.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When monetary and political interests interfere with health promotion, public policy becomes a tool of profit for money-grubbers, and all society suffers the actions of fools in high places. Total removal from any further asbestos exposure is recommended. Asbestos in any form should be banned. Mesothelioma is a preventable cancer. The overwhelming prevalences of mesotheliomata have been reported in association with asbestos. Asbestos should be relegated to the trashcan of history and not be resurrected.

When it comes to mesothelioma, none is one too many.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURES

The author has no financial conflicts of interest to declare.

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